



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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BUREAU OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

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FORECASTS OF GROUND FISH AND SEA SCALLOP ABUNDANCE
ON NEW ENGLAND BANKS

Changes in the abundance of groundfish on New England fishing banks are expected to be mixed during 1964, and the abundance of sea scallops will decline, according to Russell T. Norris, Acting Director of the North and Middle Atlantic Region of the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries. This forecast is based on information provided by biologists of the Bureau's Woods Hole Laboratory who monitor the landings of commercial fishermen, and study the population of fish and shellfish on offshore fishing banks by sampling with the Bureau's new fishing research vessel, Albatross IV.

Haddock landings in New England in 1963 will be approximately 112 million pounds, a decline from the 117 million pounds landed during the 1962 period. The stocks of haddock on New England banks are expected to remain in only fair supply during 1964 so landings in 1964 will not improve. The drop will be most noticeable in the scrod category because of the scarcity of small fish which has been due to the age groups spawned in 1960, 1961, and 1962 being below average in abundance.

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However, things will be brighter in the haddock fishery after 1964. The survival of fish spawned in 1963 appears to have been unusually high. Both the summer and fall surveys of the offshore banks by the Albatross IV indicate the greatest abundance of young fish since the surveys were started in 1953. These young fish will reach marketable size and thus begin to be important to the fishery in the summer of 1965. This 1963 age group is expected to support the fishery for several years.

Landings of cod in 1963 will be slightly less than the high value of 35 million pounds landed in 1962. There has been an upward trend in cod landings during the past few years, and abundance in 1964 is expected to remain at a high level. Albatross IV surveys show a fairly strong age group spawned this year (1963) which should enter the fishery in late 1964 and early 1965.

Landings of redfish in 1963 will be somewhat over 100 million pounds with abundance holding steady. There is some indication that there will be more fishing in the Gulf of St. Lawrence in 1964. If so, total U. S. landings in 1964 will exceed those of 1963.

Yellowtail flounder landings in 1963 will be nearly 75 million pounds, an all time high. This is due to increased abundance of fish which resulted from excellent survival of the age groups spawned in 1958, 1959, and 1960. The oldest of these age groups will be of less

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importance next year, and the following age group (1961) appears to be a poor one. Therefore, abundance and landings are expected to be lower in 1964, although still at a relatively high level.

United States landings of whiting (silver hake) will total about 92 million pounds which is slightly less than the figure for 1962. The U.S.S.R. fleet probably removed an equal quantity of whiting from the area during the year. What effect the Russian fishing will have on the stocks of whiting cannot be determined at this time, according to the Woods Hole biologists. Thus they are withholding any estimate of the availability of this species to U.S. fishermen during the year 1964. There is, however, no indication at present of any serious decline in abundance.

Sea scallops have suffered a decline in abundance during the past two years although total landings of U.S. and Canada did not slip much in 1963. United States vessels landed 19.7 million pounds which was 16 percent less than the 23.5 million pounds landed in 1962. Canadian landings, however, increased from 13.9 million pounds in 1962 to 16.4 million pounds in 1963. Research vessel surveys with the Albatross I show that the downward trend in abundance is continuing so that we can expect landings to decrease again in 1964.

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